

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

S E C R E T STATE 275259

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, PO

SUBJECT: AZORES INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT

REF.: STATE 248376

1. AT THE REQUEST OF A FORMER USG OFFICIAL (RICHARD ALLEN) DEPTOFF MET NOVEMBER 14 WITH LUIZ VAZ DO REGO WHO IDENTIFIED HIMSELF AS A MEMBER OF THE TOP LEADERSHIP OF THE FLA. REGO CONFIRMED THAT AUGUSTO SOARES (REFTEL) HAD CONTACTED US ON FLA'S INSTRUCTIONS AND EXPLAINED THAT FLA ACTIVISTS IN THE US (JOSE DE ALMEIDA AND ANTONIO MATOS) WERE CARRYING OUT ORDERS BUT DID NOT FORM PART OF FLA'S TOP CIRCLE OF LEADERS. ASKED ABOUT THE ROLE OF US CITIZEN DONALD GILLIES, REGO SAID THAT HE DID NOT UNDERSTAND GILLIES AND THAT HE ASSUMED HE WAS AN ADVENTURER. IN ANY CASE, GILLIES IS NOT PLAYING ANY ROLE IN THE FLA.

2. REGO SAID THAT HE UNDERSTOOD -- BUT DISAGREED WITH--
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US POLICY RE THE AZOREAN INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT. THE

PURPOSE OF HIS VISIT, HE SAID, WAS TO "ESTABLISH CONTACT WITH THE DEPARTMENT", TO SEE IF THERE HAD BEEN ANY MODIFICATION IN OUR AZOREAN POLICY AS THE RESULT OF THE "LEFTIST ADVANCES" IN LISBON, AND -- MOST IMPORTANTLY --

TO LEARN FIRST HAND THE PROBABLE US REACTION AFTER RPT AFTER THE FLA ASSUMES CONTROL OF THE ISLANDS WITHOUT LISBON'S CONCURRENCES.

3. REGO SAID THAT IT IS NOW ABSOLUTELY CLEAR THAT THE MAJORITY OF THE AZOREAN PEOPLE WANT INDEPENDENCE. THE FLA MUST COME TO A DECISION SOON AS TO HOW TO PROCEED. SINCE THE GOVERNMENT HAS REJECTED THE FLA SUGGESTION OF A PLEBISCITE, THE ONLY OPTION NOW OPEN IS UNILATERAL FLA ACTION TO TAKE CONTROL OF THE ISLANDS. REGO SAID HE HAS NO DOUBT THAT THE FLA COULD EASILY TAKE POWER IN THE AZORES, BUT -- IF THE PORTUGUESE REACT MILITARILY WITH AN INVASION FORCE FROM LISBON -- THERE WILL BE CERTAIN VIOLENCE AND LOSS OF LIFE ON BOTH SIDES. FOR THIS REASON, IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO THE FLA TO KNOW HOW THE US AND OTHER WESTERN NATIONS WOULD REACT TO A FORM OF UDI IN THE AZORES. WOULD WE, FOR EXAMPLE, BE WILLING TO COUNSEL THE PORTUGUESE TO PERMIT THE ISLANDS TO HAVE THEIR INDEPENDENCE AS THEY HAVE DONE WITH THE AFRICAN TERRITORIES? WOULD WE RECOGNIZE AN INDEPENDENT AZOREAN GOVERNMENT? WOULD WE ALLOW THE PORTUGUESE TO LAND TROOPS AT LAJES? WOULD WE SUPPORT THE AZOREANS POLITICALLY WITH OUR ALLIES AND IN THE U.N.

4. DEPTOFF REVIEWED OUR POLICY OF STRICT NON-INVOLVEMENT IN THE AZOREAN INDEPENDENCE QUESTION, REMINDED REGO THAT US INFLUENCE OVER THE PORTUGUESE GOVERNMENT IS LIMITED, ESPECIALLY ON AN ISSUE SUCH AS THE AZORES WHERE MANY LEFTISTS BELIEVE THE US IS SECRETLY SUPPORTING THE FLA (REGO LAUGHED). AS FOR US POLICY AFTER SOME UNILATERAL FLA ACTION TO SECURE CONTROL OVER THE ISLANDS, DEPTOFF REFUSED TO SPECULATE, NOTING THAT THE ISSUES INVOLVED WERE VERY COMPLEX AND THAT THE US DECISION IN THIS CASE WOULD BE MADE AT THE TIME THE PROBLEM AROSE AND AFTER CAREFUL CONSIDERATION OF ALL FACTORS.

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5. REGO ASKED REPEATEDLY THAT HIS IDENTITY AS AN FLA LEADER BE KEPT "STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL". HE SAID THAT HE WAS AN AGRICULTURAL ENGINEER AND HELD A CIVIL SERVICE POSITION IN PONTA DELGADA WHERE HE IS ACQUAINTED WITH PRINCIPAL OFFICER . REGO SAID THAT IF PRINCIPAL OFFICER WISHES TO DISCUSS FLA WITH HIM, HE WILL BE PLEASED TO DO SO BUT THAT HE DID NOT WANT TO INITIATE SUCH CONTACT IF

IT WOULD BE POLITICALLY EMBARRASING TO US.

6. ON NOVEMBER 18, DEPTOFF WAS CALLED BY TIME MAGAZINE REPORTER WHO SAID THAT NEXT TIME ISSUE WOULD CONTAIN STORY ON THE AZORES. HE SAID THAT HE HAD LEARNED FROM

"INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY SOURCES" THAT AN UNIDENTIFIED FLA LEADER WAS THEN IN WASHINGTON MAKING DISCREET CONTACTS AND HE ASKED IF DEPARTMENT HAD MET WITH HIM. REPORTER DID NOT RPT NOT MENTION REGO'S NAME (HE APPEARED IN FACT NOT TO KNOW ANY PARTICULAR NAME) AND DEPTOFF REFUSED TO COMMENT ON THE SUBJECT. KISSINGER

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